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## ABSTRACT

This publication provides findings from two related areas of research for people who work outside the classroom in supporting roles (e.g., principals, service providers, policymakers, and change agents): human motivation in general and teacher motivation to change practice. After discussing the creation of conditions which will motivate growth, the publication explores such issues as: seeking to understand (authentic self, psychological needs, and social context); promoting self-motivation (intrinsic motivation, external demands, internalizing ideas, self-motivation, and a motivational framework); supporting autonomy (minimizing controls and providing choice); enhancing competence (ensuring meaningful feedback and optimizing the level of challenge); and increasing relatedness (cultivating a sense of belonging and generating opportunities to know one another). A diagram illustrated the key variables in human motivation. Information on further reading and key studies is included. (Contains 121 bibliographic references.) (SM)

# UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION & SUPPORTING TEACHER RENEWAL

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# Understanding Motivation

& Supporting Teacher  
Renewal

Quality Teaching  
AND Learning Series

Northwest Regional  
Educational Laboratory



December 2001

MOTIVATION IS PERHAPS THE  
CRITICAL VARIABLE IN PRODUCING  
MAINTAINED CHANGE.

— RYAN & DECI, 2000, p. 76



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# INTRODUCTION

Teachers are likely to give their best to schools that give them something in return.

— Kushman, 1992, p. 40

**T**eachers—like all of us—want to be effective and to learn, explore new challenges, and engage in ongoing personal and professional development. People are active by nature and driven to continually adapt to changes in the environment in order to be successful. Nevertheless, energy is finite. If teaching practices are not changing dramatically, it suggests that teachers are expending their energy in other areas. Presumably, the number of demands placed on teachers' time and energy exceeds the level of support required to foster substantial and ongoing renewal.

When teacher advocates ask, "How can we motivate teachers to change practice?" it is not surprising that teachers take offense and disengage. Motivation cannot be done to someone—it cannot be controlled or commanded into being; it is a complex human dynamic that, at best, we can aim to understand and work to inspire. To that end, the research reviewed in this paper suggests conditions under which teachers may be most motivated to learn, increase competencies,

seek new challenges, and accept introduced ideas and strategies. These conditions may, for example, minimize unnecessary controls, offer meaningful feedback, and provide a manageable degree of challenge.

This publication is written for individuals who work outside the classroom in supporting roles—as principals, service providers, policy-makers, and change agents. These people might be said to be in "one-up" positions in the school hierarchy, able to influence the learning environment of teachers. Parents, teachers, managers, and coaches interested in "mobilizing others to act" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 69) may also benefit from this examination of the dynamics of motivation, but it is those whose formal capacity it is to advocate for teachers whom we address in particular.

In our eagerness to improve results, teacher advocates can override the very conditions needed to foster ongoing teacher renewal. The introduction of new ideas and regulations must be accompanied by the information and time necessary for teachers to internalize the rationale behind suggested changes and to build connections from existing values and beliefs. Unless teachers retain a sense of agency about why and how they might teach differently, the call for new approaches and innovations will likely ring hollow. In an era strapped for resources, expediency drives the belief that teachers who are informed about "best practice" will integrate these ideas into their classrooms. But if teachers



are returning from “inservice days,” for example, shelving their binders, closing their doors, and continuing on as before—what claims for efficiency can be made?

The knowledge base supporting the findings about motivation is relatively recent—Robert White introduced the term “intrinsic motivation” only in 1959. The bulk of the findings have emerged over the last two decades, with substantial debate (Cameron, 2001; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001; Deci, Ryan, & Koestner, 2001). Motivation is an unruly topic. There are more than 30 internationally recognized theories of motivation, with many in contradiction to each other. Thus, educational decisionmakers often drive by the seat of their pants, with little solid information about the factors affecting teachers’ motivation to guide them.

This paper is a synthesis of findings from two related areas of research: human motivation in general and, more specifically, teachers’ motivation to change practice. Human motivation has been heavily researched, and numerous studies based on rigorous, scientific methodology are available. The findings from more than 100 such studies inform this paper, with most conducted under well-controlled, laboratory-like conditions using at least one experimental group and one control group. These studies draw from a broad spectrum of interdisciplinary areas, including psychology, anthropology, sports, religion, multicultural studies, and education, and involve a range of age-groups, from preschool children to the elderly. This base of research reveals the tenets of human motivation—why people do the things they do—and provides the groundwork for understanding teachers’ motivation, in particular.

Fewer studies directly address teachers’ motivation to renew practice. Of those that do, most focus on how to get teachers to adopt new practices and track only short-term, visible changes in behavior, leaving the issue of motivation untapped. For this reason, this paper is largely grounded in the findings about human motivation in general, with studies relating to teachers’ experiences woven throughout. Concluding these sections on research findings and theory are concrete tips and implications for teacher advocates to consider.

Mounting evidence suggests that when people are coerced, they function with diminished capacity and often react with resistance, resentment, and a loss of energy—the antithesis of motivation. People whose actions are self-motivated tend to be high-functioning and display greater cognitive outcomes, well-being, and persistence. Whereas “change” is fast becoming a constant in schools, addressing teacher motivation invites us to move beyond quick fixes and attain lasting improvements. As the spark of human development, motivation underpins the success of any innovation or attempt to introduce renewal.

# CREATE CONDITIONS THAT MOTIVATE GROWTH

As teachers we may affirm, support, or encourage [a learner's] motivation, but it is they who are in charge of themselves, and through sharing our resources with theirs we can together create greater energy for learning.

— Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 25

**T**hose working in the area of school reform will want to retain a sense of humility about their ability to control the direction of someone else's growth; teaching and learning are both science and art. That said, the dynamics of human motivation are also no mystery. People who are savvy regarding motivation seek first to understand the people they work with—their values, goals, experiences, and beliefs—and incorporate their knowledge of the individual with the best of what is known about eliciting motivation.

Principals, service providers, and other teacher advocates wanting to inspire teachers' motivation to renew practice will want to understand the variables at play. They will want to start by recognizing that teachers "own" their own motivation, meaning, a teacher's response to a

situation, experience, person, or event originates deep within himself and the decision to act, or not, is determined by him alone. Culture, ethnicity, experience, content expertise, and other aspects of teachers' identities coalesce to frame their responses to any interaction or event. Teachers hold different inner resources and experience challenges differently. All these factors contribute to substantial variation in personal motivation. A veteran teacher, for example, will likely respond differently to a directive to use a new curriculum than a beginning teacher who has yet to form a strong professional identity. We must accept that no set list of conditions will prompt motivation.

The diagram at the end of this chapter illustrates the key variables in human motivation. It is intended to help teacher advocates generate plans for renewal that attend to the critical aspects of motivation. This chapter explores foundational issues that underlie the remaining chapters.

# SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

Nothing is more validating and affirming than feeling understood. And the moment a person begins feeling understood, that person becomes far more open to influence and change.

— Covey, 1999, p. 91

When people discuss how to “get” teachers to do anything—change practice, participate in professional development, take leadership roles—they are not talking about motivating, but about directing behavior. Even good ideas can go awry when people treat motivation as something that can be done to someone. Motivation is an elusive concept, involving both the directing and energizing of behavior. While controlling people’s behavior can produce quick and dramatic

results, the desired behaviors tend to vanish when external controls fade away. No evolution of thought or integration of new ideas will likely have occurred.

Teacher advocates who wish to contribute to teachers’ growth and improvement will want to rely on the strengths teachers already bring to the table. They need to know teachers as individuals—pedagogical-

ly, culturally, and authentically. Teachers don’t need to be clunked over the head with ideas for improvement. They need increased opportunities, time, feedback, and other supports to bolster their own motivation for growth.

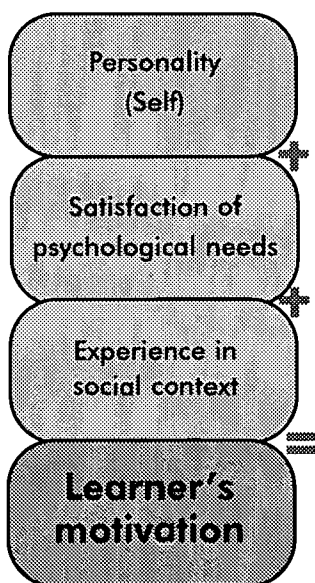
## Authentic Self

A teacher’s continued personal and professional development depends upon her freedom to act in a manner that rings true to her sense of self. Human development relies on a person’s ability to integrate knowledge, emotions, and experiences into her personal identity. If a teacher receives training in a particular approach to instruction that does not interest her or reflect her current philosophy of teaching, she is unlikely to integrate the new approach into her practice.

“Self is the integrated, psychological core from which a person acts authentically, with true volition” (Deci & Flaste, 1995, p. 5). It provides the origin of change and an avenue to high performance. It must not be circumvented. Allowing people the freedom to be who they really are engenders greater responsibility for self-directed action (p. 72).

## Psychological Needs

Research in the field of empirical psychology—based on experimentation and observation—has concluded that people possess three inherent psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. People are driven by a natural inclination, or motivation, to pursue the fulfillment of those needs (see Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1995). Sheldon,





Elliott, Kim, and Kasser (2001) conducted a study with college students in the United States and Korea to test the “universality” of these findings. Results indicated that the pursuit of these needs held true across cultures.

**Autonomy**—a person’s drive to retain a sense of agency regarding her actions

**Competence**—the desire to be good at what we value

**Relatedness**—the impulse to develop meaningful connections with others

As human beings, our need for autonomy comes from an inherent drive to retain a sense of agency over our own actions. Competence is our desire to be good at what we value. And relatedness is our impulse to develop meaningful connections with others. In the context of teacher renewal, professional-learning teams are one example of how teachers’ autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be supported. By enabling teachers to direct their own inquiry, debate the merits behind instructional practices, and relate to each other in meaningful ways, they will likely experience more energy for growth than by attending an inservice workshop on a topic they did not select.

The extent to which these needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, and the social context in which they occur, affect people’s perceptions and behavior. Motivation, performance, and development will be greatest when people are able to satisfy their basic psychological needs (Deci et al., 1991).

## Social Context

We live in social contexts that can either support or impair our individual development (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). Therefore, teachers’ interactions with principals, colleagues, parents, service providers, students, and the community will influence their participation in ongoing renewal. Learning and innovation will be evident to the degree that the social context supports teachers’ motivation.

A teacher’s experience within a group—and with particular individuals—in the school community will largely determine the extent to which she will adapt to challenges within her environment. Indeed, people holding significant roles in our lives, such as bosses or parents, have a great influence on our motivation (Deci et al., 1991). Their involvement in our lives—their devotion of “psychological and material resources” in their interactions with us (Deci & Ryan, 1991, p. 270)—appears critical to our motivation and self-esteem, especially when activities are not intrinsically motivating.

Grolnick and colleagues (1991) conducted surveys analyzing student perceptions of the support they received from their teachers and parents. Students experiencing more support in these significant relationships demonstrated higher academic achievement and more inner resources, including confidence in their own abilities and a sense of working for their own purposes. Indeed, it appears that if people “are able to attract the ongoing support of a special person who really believes in them, they may rise above the influence of their general surroundings” (Deci & Flaste, 1995, p. 179).



# PROMOTE SELF-MOTIVATION

Self-motivation...is at the heart of creativity, responsibility, healthy behavior, and lasting change.

— Deci & Flaste, 1995, p. 9

The best-crafted plans for teacher renewal often flounder because they fail to earn teacher “buy-in.” The rules of human nature cannot be set in stone. People are complex, and different personalities, policies, and events trigger varied reactions from staff members within a single school, let alone across a district or nation. Rather than a signal to increase controls, educational leaders will want to recognize that this complexity—among people and within individuals—is the pulse of human motivation. It reflects the wealth of resources and commitments teachers bring to their practice every day.

Psychologists have long identified two kinds of motivation—intrinsic and extrinsic—that place the source of motivation either inside or outside a person. More recent thinking, however, suggests that the concept of “self-motivation” can be more helpful, especially in the context of teacher renewal. Rather than emphasizing the prompt for the action—a reward, threat, praise, or deadline—self-motivation stresses how intentional a person feels about what she is doing. Is she acting with a sense of purpose or feeling swept along by forces outside her control?

## Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation—motivation that springs from within—is our innate desire to be active, curious, and effective, and to find meaning in our lives. We play, explore, create, and seek out challenges for “their own reward,” deriving satisfaction from the activity itself. In its purest state, intrinsic motivation represents an ideal instance of human freedom in which “people engage in such activity with a full sense of willingness and volition” (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999, p. 658). Also called “growth motivation,” intrinsic motivation provides the springboard for human initiative and a catalyst for ongoing improvement (Deci & Ryan, 1991).

The joy of intrinsic motivation for learning is perhaps most striking with young children—they naturally learn, play, grow, and engage in the world around them, developing ever more complex structures for interacting effectively with their environment. This interplay between themselves and the world contributes to children’s assuming the social norms, values, and skills they need for optimal functioning. As they get older and social pressures and internal expectations mount, people’s intrinsic motivation is more likely to become derailed. With the flood of demands on teachers, they especially are at risk for losing that childlike vitality and curiosity that is the revitalizing force for personal development.

## External Demands

Intrinsic motivation offers a powerful and often untapped source of inspiration for learning, yet in many ways we rely on outside sources of information to introduce new ideas and to move people along—in schools and in

life. Outside suggestions, information, feedback, limits, and expectations are typical sources of external demands—of “extrinsic motivation.” Although this language is familiar, current theorists suggest that the intrinsic-extrinsic delineation of motivation can be misleading (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Teachers “click” with a good idea from a variety of sources. Ultimately, it matters very little whether the impulse to change practice originated with a teacher’s personal reading, a conversation with a colleague, or from an outside mandate. What matters a great deal is how far she has drawn the idea into her sense of self and made it her own.

Today’s urgency to improve student success has given rise to an avalanche of rich information, research findings, professional development opportunities, and other outside sources of input for teachers to consider. Time is short, to be sure, yet when external “ideas” are paired with escalating controls, outcomes usually diminish. The irony is that trying to strong-arm the process of renewal can circumvent teachers’ need to establish a sense of agency over personal change.

## Internalizing Ideas

Unless a teacher actively integrates a new idea with her personal experience, values, pedagogy, and goals, the innovation will remain outside her sense of self. No matter how meaningful a reform strategy may be to others, or how “research-based,” a teacher must generate her own conviction that changing a teaching practice will lead to greater personal and professional efficacy and, thus, to higher student achievement. Otherwise, a misalignment develops between personal beliefs and regulated

behavior, forestalling an individual’s development. As Wlodkowski (1983) suggests, coercion produces “finishers,” not learners: teachers who do what is required of them in professional development settings, for example, yet persist unchanged when the classroom door shuts.

The term “internalization” refers to the process of taking external ideas and regulations and making them our own. A number of studies have investigated the conditions under which we are motivated to adopt ideas that were not initially interesting to us (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Lepper, 1983; Ryan, 1993; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Williams, Grow, Freedman, Ryan, & Deci, 1996). These studies find that our motivation is most precarious when we’re confronted with pressures to act on something that is not of particular interest to us. But, “the important challenge for each individual is to accept the...constraints that are meaningful to him or her, while at the same time maintaining a sense of personal freedom” (Deci & Flaste, 1995, p. 200). That is how we become increasingly capable of functioning in our environment. Indeed, the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre said that being free is to fully accept one’s limitations (Sartre, Elkaim-Sartre, & Hoare, 1991).

## Self-Motivation

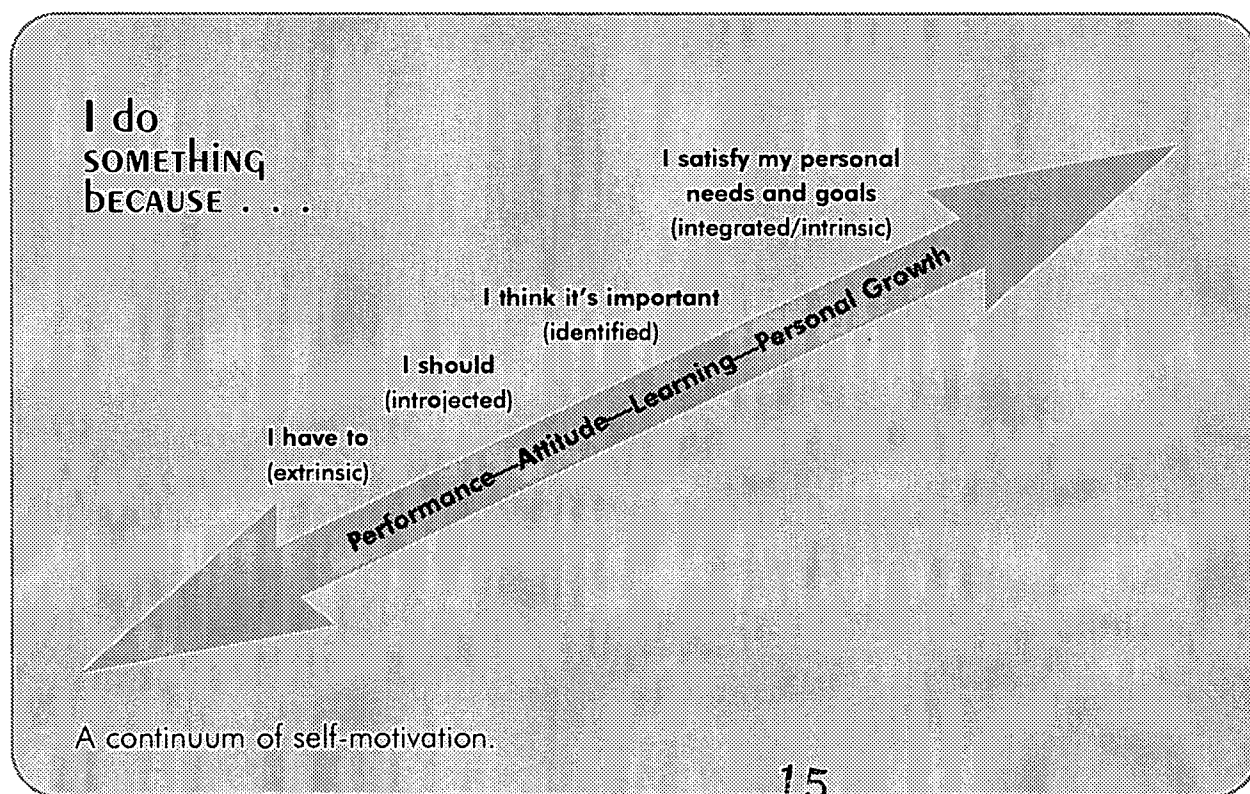
Self-motivation simply means to act with a sense of agency. While we strive to internalize, or attain a sense of control over, the external pressures in our lives, we experience varying levels of success in doing so. The following continuum illustrates the extent to which we integrate our motivations for acting. The greater the degree of internalization, the higher the level of functioning.

When we willingly undertake new behaviors that were not initially of interest to us, it does not mean that our behavior has become intrinsically motivated but, rather, we view it as important for achieving personal goals (Deci & Ryan, 1991, p. 257)—the essence of self-motivation. We have a basic psychological need to be effective at what interests us, and this need prompts us to internalize external demands that contribute to this end.

Research findings from religion (King, 1991; O'Connor & Vallerand, 1990), health care (Plant, 1991), and education (Grolnick et al., 1991) indicate that the “more integrated and autonomous one’s motives for engagement, the more positive...the outcomes and attitudes associated with it” (Deci & Ryan, 1991, p. 265). Positive outcomes can include such things as improved long-term memory; learning and conceptual understanding; empathy and moral rea-

soning; personal growth and adjustment; and more positive relatedness to others (Blais, Sabourin, Boucher, & Vallerand, 1990; Deci et al., 1991; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Koestner, Bernieri, & Zucherman, 1992; Lonky & Reihman, 1990; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Vallerand, Blais, Briere, & Pelletier, 1989). Williams and colleagues (1996), for example, demonstrated that “people were more successful in losing weight and maintaining the losses over a two-year period when their motivation was autonomous rather than controlled—when they were doing it for themselves rather than for others.”

Those working to support teachers’ growth need to look closely at what is known about how people embrace extrinsic ideas, internalizing them as their own. Eghrari and Deci (1989) attempted to isolate specific factors that help to create a context that is optimal for promoting such internalization. For people to integrate





outside regulations into their personal views, the researchers reasoned, they need to understand why the activity is important to their personal goals. The researchers speculated that people would be more willing to identify with and accept responsibility for a regulation if they did not feel pressured and if their own feelings or points of view were acknowledged. The results of their study indicated that, in fact, a combination of three specific factors—rationale, low external control, and acknowledging the person's perspective—led people to regulate their own behavior to a high degree and to feel free and happy in the activity (Eghrari & Deci, 1989).

## Motivational Framework

When left unattended, the element of motivation has a tendency to skip away from even the most carefully crafted plans for action and renewal. “Without a plan, motivation too often becomes a process of trial and error, lacking cohesion and continuity. With a plan, there is greater opportunity for all [learners] to experience...success” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000, p. 18).

The diagram on the next page provides a framework for incorporating motivation into school improvement plans. Those working in “support” roles—in a position to influence another person's motivation—might use such a framework to assess how their own actions can address the conditions known to influence motivation. The boundaries of these conditions are permeable, with the satisfaction of one condition dependent on the fulfillment of the others.

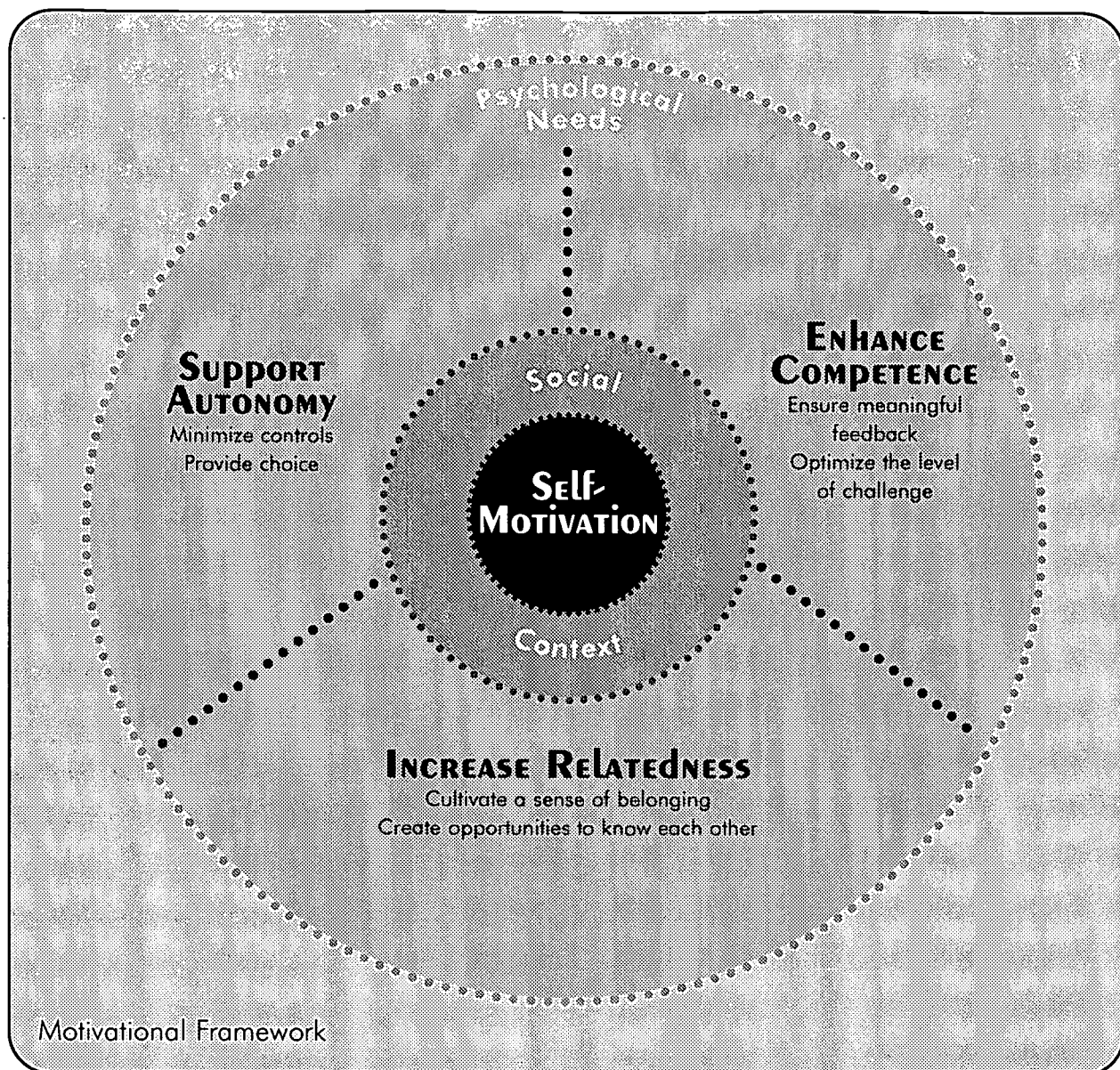
If teaching practices have not changed apace with the mounting piles of reform literature, this sug-

gests that teachers' energy is being consumed elsewhere. The push for accountability can tempt principals and policymakers to exert greater control over teachers' and students' experiences in the classroom, yet intruding too far into a teacher's domain will likely undermine the teacher's motivation and does little to foster her professional growth. Those hoping to generate renewed teaching practices will want to introduce ideas in ways that are informational and not controlling, and they will want to attend to teachers' need for:

- Autonomy
- Competence
- Relatedness

When teachers' fundamental psychological needs are met, they are more likely to direct their own growth and remain engaged in ongoing improvement. Indeed, the literature on motivation suggests that when supported by the right conditions, people usually seek ongoing development. Rather than asking, “How can we motivate teachers?” we might better ask, “How can we create conditions that elicit teachers' motivation for renewal?”—and step out of the way.





# SUPPORT AUTONOMY

To thine own self be true.

— *Hamlet*, Act I Scene 3, Shakespeare

History illustrates how behavior can be directed or controlled—people are imprisoned, marriages are arranged, career tracks are set—but people’s true selves are not correspondingly constrained. Even under dire circumstances, people create, explore, play, learn, love, and dream. Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl (1959) wrote that our attitude toward a situation is the one thing that can never be taken from us. Yet, many of us live in a prison of our own making by limiting our own choices and acting out of guilt or self-induced pressure.

According to deCharms (1976), we want to feel as though we originate our own behavior and are not “pawns” of other people’s purposes. Teachers, for example, can be forced to use a particular curriculum, or attend a professional-development workshop, but they cannot be made to fully participate or to bring their best selves into the room. Our drive for agency over our own actions can frustrate outside attempts at reform. Yet, this drive for autonomy can also be a powerful catalyst for self-motivation and ongoing improvement.

## MINIMIZE CONTROLS

When people feel pressured, compliance or defiance results. Compliance produces change that is not likely to be maintained, and defiance blocks change in the first place.

— Deci & Flaste, 1995, p. 196

Wishing to improve educational outcomes, reformers often respond by increasing control over the education environment, applying greater pressure on teachers to move them toward a particular goal. Yet, by disregarding the conditions needed to foster teachers’ self-motivation, education reformers risk sacrificing the success of their goals. Their goals, in fact, rely on teachers’ motivation, commitment, involvement, and continued growth. Indeed, the downside of the theories of motivation popular in the 1950s and 1960s—most notably the behavioral approach of B.F. Skinner’s “operant conditioning”—was their failure to recognize the detrimental effects of applying too many controls (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

## Pressured Outcomes

During the last 20 years, there has been a great deal of research into the effect of control on motivation. Conditions that are controlling are typically characterized as those that pressure people “to behave, think, or feel in specific ways” (Deci et al., 1991, p. 335). Deci, Spiegel, Ryan, Koestner, and Kauffman (1982) demonstrated that when teachers are pressured to see that students attain a particular outcome, teach-

ers respond by increasing their control over the learning environment. Teachers in these experiments spent more time talking—"telling" rather than "asking"—and gave students less opportunity to express their own opinions and process information. This resulted in diminishing rather than enhancing student outcomes. It appears the ill effects of being controlled can be passed along from administrator to teacher to student. Another study by Flink, Boggiano, and Barrett (1990) found similar results. When the teachers in the study became more controlling, "the students performed less well in problem-solving activities, both during the teaching session and subsequently" (Deci et al., 1991, p. 340)—just the opposite of what would have been in the best interest of the learners.

The conditions listed below are some of the controls people apply to prompt outcomes but that often compromise people's autonomy:

- Deadlines (Amabile, DeJong, & Lepper, 1976)
- Imposed goals (Mossholder, 1980)
- Task-contingent rewards (Deci, 1971)
- Monetary payments (Deci, 1971)
- Prizes and awards (Harackiewicz, 1979; Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973)
- Competition (Deci, Betley, Kahle, Abrams, & Porac, 1981; Vallerand, Gauvin, & Halliwell, 1986; Vallerand, Hamel, & Daoust, 1991)
- Negative consequences (Deci & Cascio, 1972)
- Surveillance (Lepper & Greene, 1975; Pittman, Davey, Alafat, Wetherill, & Kramer, 1980; Plant & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1985)

- Pressuring statements, such as "You should do X" (e.g., Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984)

Nevertheless, conditions can't be categorized as controlling or supportive because people will experience these conditions variously, depending on their individual perception. One teacher may be inspired by a principal's decision to establish a volunteer tutoring program, for example, while another teacher may find it insulting and ill-directed. Interpretations are as varied and unique as the people involved. Interpersonal contexts, background experiences, preferences, and cultural orientations coalesce to shape people's reactions to the world around them (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000).

The power of interpersonal contexts to influence motivation has been supported by a number of studies (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). In fact, when a person finds the interpersonal context conducive, conditions that might otherwise undermine his intrinsic motivation can prove to enhance it. For example, limits or competition can be felt as either supportive or controlling, "depending on the interpersonal dynamics" between the person applying those conditions and the one experiencing them (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 89).

## Effect on Performance

Environments that are controlling and conditions that direct behavior, nevertheless, take a toll on motivation and other affective, cognitive, and behavioral variables, such as:



- Cognitive abilities (Benware & Deci, 1984; Grolnick & Ryan, 1985, 1987; McGraw & Fiala, 1982; McGraw & McCullers, 1979)
- Work performance, task complexity, and achievement (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 1998; McGraw, 1978; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991)
- Persistence and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1991)
- Work satisfaction and personal attitude (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Benware & Deci, 1975; Kiesler & Sakamura, 1966)
- Creativity (Amabile, 1996, 1979)
- Internalized motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Deci, Eghari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Lepper, 1983; Ryan, 1993; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Williams et al., 1996)
- Trust, self-worth, and satisfaction (Deci et al., 1989; Deci et al., 1981; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986).
- Psychological health (Deci et al., 1981; Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993)

So, despite one's intention to help teachers improve results, relying too much on the use of controls and extrinsic pressures can actually undermine an individual's performance and growth.

## Internally Controlling

People also can be self-controlling, restricting their personal growth in the same way as outside regulations. "Being controlled by oneself

can be fully as uncomfortable and detrimental to intrinsic motivation and related processes as being controlled by another," say Deci and Ryan (1985, p. 106). "The issue is not so much whether the source of control is oneself or another, but whether or not one is being controlled." And feeling controlled—externally or internally—stifles motivation.

A teacher who feels compelled to work excessive amounts of overtime to feel that he's adequately meeting his students' needs might provide an example of someone whose internal controls are obstructing his personal growth and well-being. The teacher who strolls in late to every staff gathering, openly defying the expectation to be a part of the group, provides another example of how someone can restrict his own development. In both cases, these teachers' level of volition is questionable; they are being compelled by inner forces, rather than acting from a true sense of self.

Autonomous action depends upon a person's ability to govern himself—free of self-induced introjects, paralyzing self-criticisms, rigid inner structures, or the urge to defy set limits (Deci & Flaste, 1995). Indeed, if a person does not develop the skills to manage various elements of his environment—including conflicting emotions and experiences—he is likely to be controlled by them (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

## Appropriate Levels of Structure

Supporting people's autonomy does not mean that a school administrator, for example, must avoid establishing rules and structures altogether. People benefit from levels of structure that contribute to the development of their personal goals. "To resign from the task of structur-



# MINIMIZE CONTROLS

## MINIMIZE

Unexplained mandates from above

Reliance on pressured outcomes

Isolation of teachers

Structures, rules, and/or procedures that provide either too little support (meetings with no agendas) or too much support (meetings with no flexibility)

Rigidity in pursuing established plans (all teachers must adopt the same reading strategy adopted as part of a schoolwide initiative to improve reading)

## EMPHASIZE

Teacher involvement in decisionmaking processes

Attention to the interpersonal contexts when using pressured outcomes techniques

Opportunities for peer relationships to grow

Structures that provide optimal level of support (meetings with agendas and stated goals but flexible enough to allow teacher voice)

Flexibility strategies for obtaining goals (teachers determine which reading strategies are most appropriate for their classroom context.)

ing the situation is to give up the major responsibility of being a [manager]" (deCharms, 1976, p. 211). Deciding how much structure will contribute to an optimal climate for another's personal and professional development is a complex task, for what is optimal for one person isn't for another. It requires a person to put himself in someone else's shoes—when he can do that, he's much more likely to understand what conditions are optimal for the other person.

When an environment lacks appropriate structure, people can feel lost and like there is no connection between their actions and the outcomes they hope to achieve. They can feel directionless and helpless (Seligman, 1975). In an environment that provides appropriate levels of structure and support, teachers are more likely to perceive that they are working in a positive

school culture where working conditions are compatible with their personal goals. The structures in supportive school cultures encourage initiation and experimentation (Deci & Ryan, 1991); allow teachers a voice in determining their behavior (deCharms, 1968); give teachers the primary responsibility for the management of instruction; and shield teachers from external pressures and interference from the community and the central office (Cotton, 2001a).

## Considerations:

- Establish peer coaching and teacher-mentor opportunities to foster supportive peer relationships.
- Develop structures for: (1) meetings that provide for consistency, support, and flexibility; (2) small-group work such as teacher-learning

teams; and (3) communications that provide timely and rich information.

- Develop collaborative norms that encourage teachers to discuss personal values, beliefs, and goals and to express and understand different points of view.

- By getting to know a teacher as an individual, you gain insights into what might be limiting his professional growth—whether self-induced controls or external pressures. Encourage him to talk and share his views, and allow yourself the mental freedom to “walk in his shoes.” By listening, you’ll glean indications about where the teacher is on the continuum of self-motivation and what conditions and challenges may be optimal for his professional growth.

- If a teacher is too self-controlling—highly self-critical and afraid to take risks—this might indicate that he feels the work environment doesn’t support his autonomy. When talking with him about his performance, allow him to critique himself—he’ll likely raise every issue and possible solution that you would have—and help him balance his self-assessment by emphasizing his competence.

## Provide Choice

Freedom is the capacity to direct your own behavior.

— deCharms, 1976, p. 15

Environments that support autonomy allow personal choice while providing structures that support individuals’ effectiveness. Limits, deadlines, and other outside constraints are a reality for all of us, and for good reason. The aim of fostering autonomy and motivation is not to create environments without regulations, but to create structures that provide teachers with options and information that will support their own learning process. Teacher advocates will want to ensure that teachers’ learning environments contain no more controls than necessary.

## Information, Resources, and Flexibility

Access to information is the key to personal choice. And “choice is the key to self-determination and authenticity” (Deci & Flaste, 1995, p. 10). Unless teachers have access to adequate resources and the rationale for suggested reforms, they are unlikely to engage in “introduced” plans for their personal and professional development. Teachers need information that respects their autonomy, enhances their current strengths, holds personal relevance, and contributes to their success in the classroom. Unless adequate financial resources, training, and time to act accompany mandates for instructional changes, teachers will not truly experience meaningful choice (Cotton, 1992, p. 8).

Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, and Holt (1984) explored the effects of providing a rationale for why an uninteresting activity—or an unwanted limitation—was important. They conducted an art activity with children in which they asked them to be neat. To one group of children, the researchers explained their rationale for this “limiting” request. To another group of children, the researchers simply told the children they “should” be neat. The researchers found that by explaining the reason for their request—that other children would be using the paints, too, and that they would want to find the paints in good condition—and acknowledging the children’s inclination to be messy, the children were willing to accept the limit with good cheer, their self-esteem intact.

## Noncontrolling Language

Studies show that by supporting choice (Zucherman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, & Deci, 1978) and by using noncontrolling language (Ryan, Mims, & Koestner, 1983), one can promote another’s autonomy and enhance his self-motivation for a new idea. A statement such as “You should use assessments to inform instruction” places the reason for acting outside the teacher, tends to feel controlling, and provides little information. By contrast, the following statement is more likely to increase a teacher’s receptivity: “Assessments that identify student misperceptions and understandings during instruction can help facilitate planning. Here are some examples that can be tried in a variety of settings.” By introducing it as an invitation—rather than as a demand—one emphasizes choice rather than control.

When college students in one study were given choices about which tasks to engage in and how much time to allot to each task, they were more

intrinsically motivated than those students who were assigned narrow parameters (Zucherman et al., 1978). Another study produced similar results with young children (Swann and Pittman, 1977). Both studies underscore that emphasizing choice, rather than exerting control, helps people to internalize uninteresting regulations or activities.

## Meaningful Choice

Cotton (1992), who has studied a number of school issues related to choice, has found that “research has clearly established that teachers’ desire to participate in decisionmaking centers on the school’s technical core—its curriculum and instructional program” (p. 7). It is not simply choice, but meaningful choice in areas teachers find personally relevant that contributes to positive results. While “districts are often unwilling to delegate real decisionmaking authority to schools in these areas,” teachers can lose initiative if the choices they are given are not in areas that tap into their interests and skills (p. 7).

Federal, state, and district regulations often constrain school-level options, but “research has shown that increased flexibility and selective waiving of these constraints is associated with more successful school...efforts” (p. 8).

Small schools created around a particular vision allow for the self-selection of teachers and students—another example of increased choice. Cotton (2001b) found evidence to suggest that “the most successful restructured learning units are those whose teachers and students have both chosen to be there” (p. 28). Small schools also increase the feasibility of responding to spontaneous learning opportunities, contributing to more flexible instructional environments.



# Provide Choice

## MINIMIZE

Making demands of teachers without explanation or discussion of rationale

Use of language that is perceived to be controlling

Inundating teachers with superfluous decisionmaking responsibilities in areas that do not tap their interests or expertise

## EMPHASIZE

Opportunity to understand, discuss, and debate the reasons behind requests and mandates.

Use of non-controlling language and language that emphasizes individual choice

Opportunities for teachers to be involved in collaborative problem solving on real school issues

## Considerations:

- Develop norms of collaboration that promote effective communication.
- Improve communication structures and processes so that the school becomes information-rich (e.g., use of e-mail for regular bulletins, staff flyers, faculty meetings, hallway conversations).
- Provide teachers with more instructional autonomy.
- Encourage teachers to make real choices about such things as how to learn, what to learn, where to learn, when a learning experience will be considered to be complete, how learning will be assessed, with whom to learn, and how to solve emerging problems.
- Provide meaningful information that enables teachers to make choices about things that matter most to them. Such information will respect teachers' autonomy, be personally relevant to them, and provide rationale for requests and directives from above.



# ENHANCE COMPETENCE

Competence is the accumulated result of one's effective interaction with the environment, of one's exploration, learning, and adaptation.

— Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 27

Most teachers do not want to be just good teachers, they want to be great teachers. Not many of us want to be OK parents, we want to be outstanding parents—or artists, athletes, lovers. Whatever we do, we want to do it well. As discussed earlier, competence means being good at what we value. Human nature compels us to be effective in dealing with our environment (White, 1959) and to strive to be successful. Indeed, according to Piaget (1971), “the nature of life is constantly to overtake itself” (p. 362).

Feedback on our competence and support for our autonomy work hand in hand to promote self-motivated behaviors—one ceases to exist without the other. For it is not competence alone, but self-determined competence we strive to achieve. While positive feedback can boost motivation, that alone is not enough (Boggiano & Ruble, 1979; Vallerand & Reid, 1984). Studies show that a noncontrolling atmosphere is also essential to promote competence (Fisher, 1978; Ryan, 1982).

## ENSURE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

Positive feedback has often been found to increase intrinsic motivation

— Deci & Ryan, 1991, p. 269

Feedback surrounds us, generating both deliberate and unintended effects. Our competence and sense of self-determination is affirmed largely through the cues we perceive in the environment that tell us we have been successful in achieving our aims. Feedback comes in many forms—verbal, financial, social—and can vary in the degree to which it fosters growth or directs behavior.

Good intentions often collide with what research has found to truly affect people's motivation. Assessments, salary incentives, verbal and tangible “rewards,” evaluation procedures, and other types of feedback often backfire, unwittingly shutting down intrinsic motivation. Certainly, our understanding about what is effective in these arenas has shifted over the years, and it is important for those interested in eliciting teachers' motivation to understand the subtleties of when and how feedback influences intrinsic motivation and behavior. Research has investigated two main types of rewards—positive verbal feedback and tangible rewards—along with the interpersonal contexts in which they occur.

### Positive Verbal Feedback

Early studies provided evidence that people experience positive verbal feedback, or “verbal rewards,” differently from tangible rewards (Deci, 1971). Verbal rewards are the only type of reward shown to increase intrinsic motivation, and not in all cases (Deci, Koestner, &

Ryan, 1999). Researchers suggest that positive verbal feedback enhances intrinsic motivation because it affirms someone's competence and, for the most part, it is unexpected. Although it is difficult to define an "expected" verbal reward, three studies confirmed that when verbal feedback becomes routine, or expected, it undermines intrinsic motivation. When feedback is provided in a controlling context—where the feedback is intended to control behavior—its positive aspects are lost.

Even positive statements can feel controlling when they are couched in a directive, placing the speaker's own agenda ahead of the listener's. For example, a comment such as "Excellent, you should keep up the good work" suggests that the speaker wants you to produce more of the same (Ryan, 1982). In the case of one experiment, participants were told, "I haven't been able to use most of the data... but you are doing really well, and if you keep it up I'll be able to use yours..." (Pittman et al., 1980). Statements like these tend to decrease people's motivation for tasks that they initially found interesting. Given how easy it is to use such statements in the real world, this finding emphasizes the complexity of using verbal feedback in positive ways.

Teachers' feelings of competence can be enhanced by frequent and meaningful interaction and feedback from administrators, peers, parents, and students (Kushman, 1992; Smylie, 1990). The importance of appropriate, informative feedback is increasingly evident. Research indicates that when principals observe teachers' classrooms regularly and provide constructive feedback, student academic achievement rises (Cotton, 2001a). Such meaningful interaction with principals can help teachers feel successful in their attempts to implement new

teaching practices and reforms. Indeed, the evidence suggests that motivation increases when people's work environments supply them with constructive feedback (Deci et al., 1982, p. 858).

According to Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2000, pp. 202–204), meaningful and helpful feedback is:

- *Informational rather than controlling.* It should emphasize a learner's increasing effectiveness or creativity or capacity as a self-determined learner.
- *Focused on evidence of the learner's effectiveness relative to the learner's intent.* This most often is feedback that is based on agreed-upon standards, models, and criteria for success.
- *Specific and constructive.* It is difficult for a person to improve performance when she or he can realize only in general terms how well she or he has done.
- *[Sometimes] quantitative.* In some areas... quantitative feedback has definite advantages.
- *Prompt.* Feedback is given as the situation demands, which may not be immediately.
- *Frequent.* Frequent feedback is probably most helpful when new learning is occurring.
- *Positive.* Positive feedback places emphasis on improvements and progress rather than on deficiencies and mistakes.
- *Related to impact criteria.* Impact criteria are the main reasons someone is learning something.
- *Personal and differential.* Differential feedback uses self-comparison. It focuses on the ways in which personal improvement has occurred since a learning activity was last performed.

## Tangible Rewards

Tangible rewards can be used to control short-term behavior, but these rewards will not encourage a person to take responsibility for his own behavior or to develop authentic self-motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). While tangible rewards almost always undermine intrinsic motivation, there are two notable exceptions: when tangible rewards are not expected and when they're not contingent upon a task (Deci et al., 1999). When a tangible reward is received unexpectedly—after a task is performed, for example—it usually has no effect on a person's intrinsic motivation. The person is not likely to experience the task and his behavior as being controlled by the promise of a reward (Deci et al., 1999).

Nor is intrinsic motivation enhanced by performance-based rewards—rewards that are given for “doing well at a task or for performing up to a specified standard” (Ryan et al., 1983).

Performance-based rewards are almost always

accompanied by some degree of negative feedback, however unintended. According to Deci et al. (1999, p. 643), recipients often believe “that a larger reward was possible if they performed better, so the reward conveyed less-than-positive (and in some cases, very negative) feedback.”

Furthermore, studies have found that when a reward is held out to motivate a person to perform a task, he will often do what he has to do to get the reward, but nothing more. In other words, when extrinsically motivated by the promise of a reward, people tend to do the minimum amount of work that will yield the maximum reward (Kruglanski, Stein, & Riter, 1977).

### Considerations:

To ensure meaningful feedback, give feedback that is—

- Competence-building and supportive of teachers' autonomy and self-motivation

## ENSURE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

### MINIMIZE

Feedback that is perceived as controlling

Feedback that is intended to direct or change behavior

Tangible rewards, unless unexpected and intended to convey appreciation for a task well done

### EMPHASIZE

Feedback that is informational and respects autonomy

Feedback that helps build competence

Feedback that encourages personal responsibility and self-motivation



- Informational rather than controlling, emphasizing a person's increased effectiveness, creativity, and capacity as a self-determined individual

- Positive, showing progress toward agreed-upon standards, goals, and/or criteria for success and emphasizing improvements and progress rather than deficiencies and mistakes

- Specific and constructive and, when possible, quantitative

- Prompt, frequent, and unexpected—given as the situation demands

- Supported by explanation and the rationale for change

- Personal and focused on the ways in which personal improvement has occurred since the last interaction

- Respectful of teacher autonomy, given freely without being couched in a directive

- Presented as an invitation, rather than a demand

- A catalyst for teachers to talk about their own practice and for you to listen

- Verbal as well as inherent in other kinds of interaction, such as when a principal observes a teacher teaching—in this way, the principal can show interest and support for the teacher's work

(Adapted with permission from Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000)

## Optimize the level of challenge

Motivation is such that the feeling [of competence] seems to result only when there is some continual stretching of one's capacities.

— Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 27

Intrinsically, people desire to seek out new challenges that contribute to their development (Deci, 1975; Hunt, 1965; Piaget, 1952). Under optimal conditions, people continually integrate new knowledge and experience into their sense of self, becoming “progressively more elaborated, refined, and adaptive” (Bess, 1997, p. 58). When circumstances prevent this process of integration, personal development stalls and performance is diminished. Conditions supporting teachers' optimal development need to be nurtured and protected.

### Desire for Challenge

The satisfaction of our needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in turn advances our internal drive to seek out challenges and opportunities to expand our knowledge and experience. The need for competence in particular leads us to pursue and overcome challenges (Danner & Lonky, 1981). Studies with both children (Danner & Lonky, 1981) and college students (Shapira, 1976) show that when we are free to select the activities we want to work on, we select ones that are just beyond our current ability level.



## The Influence of Pressure

A certain level of challenge is needed for continued personal and professional development. But too much pressure, and settings that are too controlling, can lead a person to drop below her optimal level of challenge in order to ensure her competence. Optimal growth and development necessitates feeling safe. Shapira (1976) found that when college students working on puzzles were free to choose which puzzles to work on, they selected those with a high level of difficulty. However, when their performance was contingent on an extrinsic reward, they dropped to a level of difficulty that was too low to contribute to their continued development (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Pittman, Emery, & Boffiano, 1982).

In a sense, a school community also strives to be self-motivated, just as its teachers do. School change theorists have long advocated for the need for both pressure and support for organizational reform—suggesting the need for school and district leaders to pair introduced reforms with appropriate resources and assistance (Crandall et al., 1982; Huberman & Miles, 1984). If school change is supported by appropriate resources and a conducive social context, the school community can attain its own sense of agency and succeed in adapting current organizational practices.

## Rising to a Challenge

McMullin and Steffen (1982) found that when people in their study worked on activities that became slightly more difficult, they displayed more intrinsic motivation than when the level of difficulty remained constant. Accelerating difficulty seemed to keep the challenge optimal

for the subjects and thus maintained their intrinsic motivation for the activity (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 59). Csikszentmihalyi (1975) found that when activities are optimally challenging for a person's capacities, the person is more likely to enjoy them and experience "flow," a state of intense focus and pleasure.

## When the Challenge Is Too Great

Schools are inundated with multiple expectations, conflicting demands, and diverse student populations and, thus, represent a challenging work environment. The press of classroom responsibilities confronts teachers every day, affecting their attitudes and instructional choices. Schmidt, McKnight, and Raizen (1997) describe the work environment of U.S. schools, saying "the limits on the professional lives of teachers seriously affect teachers' instructional decisions" (p. 87). The tax on time alone can isolate teachers from other adults, exhaust their energy, and limit their opportunities for sustained reflection. Teachers are too often forced to "make decisions based on pressing realities [of]...a demanding work environment. They settle for the first alternative that seems good enough to them rather than searching for the best" (p. 87).

## Considerations:

- Tap into teachers' drive to seek challenges by fostering their autonomy and allowing them to make meaningful choices about their own professional development.
- Build a safe environment with a high degree of trust by implementing group norms, effective

tive communication procedures, and consensus-based decisionmaking.

- Help teachers connect their prior knowledge and experiences to new ideas and expectations.
- Create opportunities for teams of teachers to engage in inquiry and investigation.
- Elicit high-quality responses from all teachers.
- Provide information, consequences, and resources that support teachers' commitment to their own growth and learning.
- Help all teachers to identify their accomplishments.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to self-assess their learning and personal responsibility for contributing to the classroom as a learning community. For example, encourage teachers to examine student work with colleagues, engage in peer coaching, write in journals, and share their success stories.

## How To Optimize Level of Challenge for Teachers

### MINIMIZE

Externally-driven adoption of new activities or strategies

Ignoring of interpersonal and group factors such as safety, trust, and explicit encouragement of risk-taking

### EMPHASIZE

Teacher choice in identifying and selecting improvements and changes to be made

Intentional building of trust and use of safety nets such as partnering with a colleague and team-based activities

# INCREASE RELATEDNESS

Recognition and satisfaction stem not only from being a masterful teacher but also from being a member of a masterful group.

— Little, 1990, p. 165

In 1624, the poet John Donne wrote “no man is an island.” Today, explorations in science, business, philosophy, and education feed a growing recognition that the world is composed of adaptive networks of relationships (Stacey, 1996). Matter itself alters when scientists attempt to view it in isolation, suggesting that “nothing exists independent of its relationship with something else” (Wheatley, 1992, p. 34). This also can be said of the intricacies of the human network.

Baumeister and Leary (1995) looked at the findings from more than 300 studies and found sufficient evidence to conclude that people are motivated by a fundamental human need to belong. If there has been uncertainty in the field of psychology, “the error has not been to deny the existence of such a motive so much as to underappreciate it” (p. 522). Our desire to develop satisfying, meaningful relationships generates significant emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes. Dewey (1958) and Vygotsky (1978) both believed that learning is a social endeavor. They emphasized that people not only learn well with others, but learn *because* of their interaction with others. Writers continue to elaborate on the benefits

of teachers learning together—through shared reflection, study groups, common planning, peer coaching, and other collaborative practices—stressing that “there is a ceiling effect on how much we can learn if we keep to ourselves” (Fullan, 1993, p. 17).

Supporting teachers’ need for relatedness is not ancillary to improving results for students. Indeed, research indicates that professional learning communities can strengthen educators’ commitment to reform, leading to a renewal of teaching practices and improved student achievement (Hord, 1997; Little, 1982; Kruse & Louis, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989). Newmann (1996) looked at student achievement in schools undertaking structural reforms and concluded that “to promote learning of high intellectual quality, a school must build the capacity of its staff to work well as a unit” (p. 7). With the link between human relatedness and development growing stronger, education reformers will want to ensure that plans for renewal promote teachers’ sense of belonging and generate opportunities for colleagues to learn together in meaningful ways.



## CULTIVATE A SENSE OF BELONGING

People who feel unsafe, unconnected, and disrespected are unlikely to be motivated to learn.

— Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 2

The essence of community is the sense of belonging, the impulse that signals to a person that he is important and can rely on members of the wider community to help him meet his needs. Furman suggests that this community will depend on its members experiencing feelings of belonging, trust, and safety—even when they have conflicting opinions and diverse backgrounds (1998). The need to belong creates a desire to “feel securely connected with others in the environment and to experience oneself as worthy of love and respect” (Ostermann, 2000, p. 325). At times shortchanged in the push for achievement, a sense of “belonging” generates powerful emo-

tional and cognitive reactions and plays a pivotal role in forming our responses to events (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Indeed, the most critical issue facing schools today may “stem not from the lack of achievement, but from the lack of belonging” (Kunc, 1992, p.38).

Teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, behavior, and motivation to adopt new practices are affected by the quality of their connection to others—including students, school staff, and the larger community. Unfortunately, schools often appear to be alienating places for students and teachers (Anderman & Machr, 1994; Hargreaves, Earl, & Ryan, 1996).

Schools differ in how well they address teachers’ need for belonging. Teachers’ relationships, collegiality, and collaborations are influenced by the characteristics of the school environment, and this affects their professional commitment, sense of efficacy, motivation, and performance (Kushman, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1985, 1989). McCombs (1991) notes that supportive environments allow teachers to feel understood, accepted, and affirmed—meaning they are

## CULTIVATE A SENSE OF BELONGING

### MINIMIZE

Teachers working in isolation from each other and from the broader community of students

Tunnel vision in individual classrooms where teachers are solely concerned with “their students”

Problem solving by administrators

### EMPHASIZE

Teachers interacting with other teachers, inside the school, inside the district, and beyond, to share successes and learn from each other

Schoolwide collective responsibility for all students within the school community

Staff involvement in looking at and solving school issues as a community



taken seriously, heard, valued, understood, and respected (p. 122).

Teachers who feel connected within the school community are likely to exhibit greater social responsibility, demonstrating more self-regulation, autonomy, and willingness to embrace established norms and values (Kruse & Louis, 1997; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Feeling like they “belong,” teachers often display greater empathy, social competence, democratic values, and enjoyment in helping their colleagues learn. In general, when people feel connected in significant ways, they demonstrate greater trust and respect, conflict resolution, concern for others, and other pro-social behaviors (Ostermann, 2000). By contrast, when their need to belong goes unmet they can experience intense negative feelings, including anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy, loneliness, and diminished self-esteem (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Resnick et al., 1997).

When we feel ignored—especially by people we perceive to be important in our lives—our motivation almost always suffers. While conducting a study on the effect of rewards on intrinsic motivation, Anderson, Manoogian, and Reznick (1976) made an unexpected discovery. Motivation suffered the most in the control group, where the researcher was present but uninvolved with the participants. The control group thus revealed that the affective realm of human development can exert a powerful influence on motivation.

## Considerations:

- Establish structures that promote teacher interaction and reduce teacher isolation, for example, peer coaches, teacher-mentors, and opportunities for structured peer observation as well as strategies for teachers collaboratively examining student work (for example, *Listening to Student Voices Toolkit*, available online at [www.nwrel.org/scpd/scc/studentvoices/](http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/scc/studentvoices/)).
- Involve all staff in developing a common school vision that stresses the success of all students—no excuses.
- Implement policies and procedures that promote shared decisionmaking based on consensus, when appropriate, and involve all staff in examining and solving schoolwide problems and issues.
- Plans for renewal should address teachers’ need to feel that they “belong” and incorporate strategies for promoting this.

## GENERATE OPPORTUNITIES TO KNOW EACH OTHER

The sense of relatedness affects people's perceptions of others, leading people to view friends and group members more favorably and to think about them more often and in more complex ways.

— Osterman, 2000, p. 327

Organizational policies and practices can foster isolation, precluding the development of a sense of community in schools (Kunc, 1992). Organizational structures and schedules in schools often limit teachers' opportunities for movement, dialogue, collaborative planning, or other opportunities to get to know others deeply. This allows stereotypes and philosophical differences to continue unchallenged and unexplored.

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995) our need for relatedness is so pervasive that we will attempt to cultivate relationships even under detrimental conditions. Although we may be naturally inclined to form attachments with each other, "the primary condition necessary for the development of relationships is frequent and positive interaction...there should be a direct relationship between the frequency and quality of interaction and [a learner's] sense of community" (Osterman, 2000, p. 347).

Discussion within a supportive community—where opinions can be expressed safely—enables teachers to discover that others care about them. This fosters trust, mutual respect, and solidarity. Unfortunately, relatively few opportunities exist in a typical school day for teachers to get to

know one another, share personal understandings, and learn together (Sergiovanni, 1994).

### Structural Barriers

For years, organizational research has explored the connection between working conditions and worker performance, but educational research has only recently explored this link. Current findings articulate the influence of school working conditions on teacher attitudes and practice, such as studies by Johnson (1990), Kushman (1992), Lieberman (1988), Little (1982), and Rosenholtz (1989).

An assumption has long existed that people's ability to establish positive relationships is a factor of their own personalities and individual choices. But evidence suggests that people in roles of authority largely determine how well others will get to know one another and their perceptions of each other. A manager's style, he organizational structures she puts in place, and the opportunities she provides for togetherness all influence people's understandings and beliefs about each other (Osterman, 2000, p. 347).

### Organizational Alternatives

Kruse and Louis (1997) examine a mechanism for generating community: interdisciplinary teacher teams. They suggest that instruction must become "more than the endeavors of individual teachers in professionally isolated classrooms" (Kruse & Louis, 1997, p. 266). They report that "teachers who are part of such teams often speak glowingly of them," and quoted a teacher who said, "Teaming helps me to know what is going [on] in other teachers' classes. I can plan lessons to work with what other teach-

# GENERATE OPPORTUNITIES TO KNOW EACH OTHER

## MINIMIZE

Teacher isolation

Focusing on simply "getting the job done"

## EMPHASIZE

Opportunity for teachers to talk meaningfully about things that matter to them, such as curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Focus on getting the job done within a supportive community

ers are doing and help kids understand the concepts better." Working in teams, the teachers in the study found much-needed psychological and academic support from their teammates. Teams can help teachers create a network of supportive colleagues who share the same interests, students, and academic focus" (p. 262).

Other organizational options that also may contribute to teachers' sense of relatedness include smaller schools, mentoring relationships, and other practices that extend the amount of time teachers are able to spend together. "It is commonly accepted and documented that the interaction and dialogue that are central to the notion of collegiality not only satisfy emotional needs but lead to personal and professional learning" (Osterman, 2000, p. 325).

Many of the changes necessary to satisfy the need for relatedness among teachers involve significant changes in the cultural values, norms, policies, and practices that dominate schooling. Hargreaves and colleagues (1996) suggest that opportunities to increase relatedness may very well signify the single greatest reforms needed in schools today.

## Considerations:

- Provide intentional opportunities for teachers to get to know one another both in formal and informal situations, for example, by using relational ice-breakers and closures to start and end staff meetings, structured peer observations, shared planning time, and staff retreats.
- Develop safe environments for teachers to have open dialogue by, for example, establishing and using group norms, participating in small-group work, and forming teacher teams.
- Lesson study is a structure that allows teacher teams to meet regularly to create, teach, and revise lessons. By meeting regularly, creating lessons together, trying lessons out in the classroom, observing each other teach, and sharing feedback, teacher teams create high-quality lessons while getting to know each other very well as teachers.
- Smaller learning communities allow teachers to know each other—and their students—better. Smaller communities generate more manageable professional learning environments, increasing teachers' opportunity to be involved in decisions related to their schedules, curriculum, and instructional practices.



# CONCLUSION

Control is an easy answer...And it sounds tough, so it feels reassuring to people who believe things have gone awry but have neither the time nor the energy to think about the problems, let alone do something about them.

— Deci & Flaste, 1995, p. 1

Asking teachers to change how they teach is akin to asking them to change who they are, what they value, and how they think. This is no simple request. Change introduces vulnerability, doubt, anxiety, and fear, and teachers, faced with ever-heightened scrutiny, may feel they are being urged to move out on a limb with the tree shaking. If teacher advocates want to help teachers change practice and boost student learning, then they will want to reflect on how their own practice has changed in the last five, 10, or even 20 years. If we advise teachers to teach through inquiry, how can we restrict their opportunities to engage in dialogue with colleagues and pursue their own professional deliberations? Unless we safeguard the conditions that bolster teacher growth, how can teachers renew practice over time? Teacher advocates, while striving to improve success for students, will want to be cognizant of the motivational conditions at play when working with teachers.

port and control. There is a delicate balance to strike here, as the detrimental effects of surplus controls have been largely overlooked. Indeed, studies show that when people in “one-up” positions feel pressured to achieve particular results, they tend to impose greater controls over others—principals over teachers, teachers over students, or parents over children (Deci et al., 1982; Flink et al., 1990). Unfortunately, this tendency to increase structures and to direct others’ behavior appears to be magnified in low-performing settings—where teachers’ renewal is often most critical (Cotton, 2001a). While grounded in good intentions, the belief that greater controls will improve results is, to some degree, misguided, and runs the risk of diminishing a number of potential cognitive and affective benefits.

Teachers’ own resources—their commitment and motivation for renewal—have been largely overlooked in the rush for results. Yet, our preoccupation with the tangible facets of teaching—assessments, standards, and models for improvement—may lead us to underestimate the powerful human variables at play in teaching and learning. Certainly, in an era strapped for resources, with educators and others desperate to improve results for kids, we can scarcely afford to waste time. Encompassing the messier aspects—the realities—of human nature in our plans for renewal may give us a purchase toward lasting improvement.

The hierarchical nature of the educational community presents a framework for both sup-



# FURTHER READING

**Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (Eds.). (1999).** *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

An overview of the changes and challenges facing the teaching profession, this book reinforces the knowledge that the quality of teaching strongly influences student achievement. It advocates that teachers need meaningful professional learning opportunities to enhance the quality of their instruction. Two chapters will be especially useful to administrators and professional development providers: "Organizing Schools for Teacher Learning," by Judith Warren Little, and "Investing in Teacher Learning: Staff Development and Instructional Improvement," by Richard Elmore and Deanna Burney.

**Deci, E.L., & Flaste, R. (1995).** *Why we do what we do: Understanding self-motivation.* New York, NY: Penguin Books.

Easy to read, this book provides a useful summary of the critical dynamics of human motivation. The book highlights the importance of work and learning environments that are informational, rather than controlling. Edward Deci is the leading expert on intrinsic motivation and the chief proponent of self-determination theory.

**Deci, E.L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R.M. (2001).** Extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation in education: Reconsidered once again. *Review of Educational Research*, 71(1), 1–27.

This brief article summarizes the research related to the undermining effect of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. It addresses the considerable controversy in this area among researchers, noting how flawed methodology has contributed to a number of popular misconceptions. It also

explores the relevance of these findings to educational practice.

**Ginsberg, M.B., & Wlodkowski, R.J. (2000).** *Creating highly motivating classrooms for all students: A schoolwide approach to powerful teaching with diverse learners.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

This practical guide offers suggestions and tools for implementing and sustaining a culturally responsive learning environment—at the classroom level and schoolwide. The book is grounded in research findings that all people are motivated to learn, suggesting that an educator's role is to encourage, support, and elicit this desire.

**Robb, L. (2000).** *Redefining staff development: A collaborative model for teachers and administrators.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

This book shares strategies for renewing teachers' practices, including study groups, coaching, peer mentoring, and sustained opportunities for reading, self-evaluation, conversation, and investigation. The book emphasizes that many powerful—and financially accessible—opportunities exist for changing practice. Education leaders need simply to embrace them.

**WestEd. (2000).** *Teachers who learn, kids who achieve: A look at schools with model professional development.* San Francisco, CA:

Author.

This report shares vignettes from eight school communities involved in staff development. It highlights the principles of success involved in connecting professional learning opportunities to achievement gains for kids. In short, it supports the notion that students achieve because their teachers are learners.

# Key Studies

**Baumeister, R.F., & Leary, M.R. (1995).** The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. This meta-analysis of more than 300 studies concludes that the desire to belong is a fundamental human motivation, and a link exists between the need to belong and various cognitive processes, emotional patterns, behaviors, health, and well-being.

**Connell, J.P., & Wellborn, J.G. (1991).** Competence, autonomy, and relatedness: A motivational analysis of self-system processes. In M.R. Gunnar & L.A. Sroufe (Eds.), *Self processes and development* (Vol. 23, pp. 43–77). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. The researchers suggest that relatedness is one of three basic psychological conditions essential for human growth and development, along with autonomy and competence. Those who experience autonomy will perceive themselves to have choice and will also experience a connectedness between their actions and personal goals.

**deCharms, R. (1976).** *Enhancing motivation: Change in the classroom*. New York, NY: Irvington. A founding study of intrinsic motivation, deCharms assessed inner-city students' perceptions of the climate of their classrooms over a four-year period. Findings showed that when conditions are created to facilitate intrinsic motivation, students' learning—particularly conceptual learning and creative thinking—increases relative to that of students in settings that foster extrinsically oriented learning.

**Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (1985).** *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.

Based on their own studies and a review of existing research in empirical psychology, the authors describe an organismic theory of human motivation. They present their findings in three “mini-theories”—cognitive domain theory, organismic integration theory, and causality orientation theory—each with its own line of research and empirical validation.

**Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (1991).** A motivational approach to self: Integration in personality. In R. Dienstbier (ed.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation. Vol. 38: Perspectives on motivation* (pp. 237–288). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

A useful summary of the work of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, this study looks at evidence supporting a link between internalization and intrinsic motivation. It finds that an emphasis on choice, rather than controls, contributes to people's internalizing the regulation of an uninteresting activity.

**Deci, E.L., Connell, J.P., & Ryan, R.M. (1989).** Self-determination in a work organization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74(4), 580–590. Researchers found that when people experienced their work-group climate as supportive of their autonomy, rather than as controlling, their intrinsic motivation increased, as well as their trust, self-worth, and satisfaction.

**Deci, E.L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R.M. (1999).** A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(6), 627–668.

In this meta-analysis of 128 studies, researchers examined the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation and concluded that rewards—

whether contingent on engagement, completion, or performance—significantly undermined intrinsic motivation.

**Deci, E.L., Schwartz, A.J., Sheinman, L., & Ryan, R.M. (1981).** An instrument to assess adults' orientations toward control versus autonomy with children: Reflections on intrinsic motivation and perceived competence. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 73(5), 642–650.

This study compared teachers who tended to apply controls to children's behaviors and those who supported children's autonomy. The children of the autonomy-oriented teachers were more intrinsically motivated and had higher self-esteem than children of teachers who were more control-oriented.

**Deci, E.L., Vallerand, R.J., Pelletier, L.G., & Ryan, R.M. (1991).** Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3–4), 325–346.

In this review, the authors draw connections between motivational research, teacher practices, and educational policy. They touch on the trickle-down effect of excessive pressures—administrators to teachers, teachers to students. Discusses the influence of student behavior on teacher motivation.

**Grolnick, W.S., & Ryan, R.M. (1987).** Autonomy in children's learning: An experimental and individual difference investigation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(5), 890–898.

This study examined the effect of motivationally relevant conditions on participants' performance and emotional experience of a learning task. Researchers compared two directed-learning conditions (controlling versus noncontrolling) against a control group of nondirected, spontaneous

learning. They found that both directed groups displayed greater rote learning than the non-directed control group—but the nondirected and the noncontrolling groups displayed greater interest and conceptual learning compared to the controlling group.

**Grolnick, W.S., & Ryan, R.M. (1989).** Parent styles associated with children's self-regulation and competence in school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81(2), 143–154.

The authors studied the parental styles, support for autonomy, and use of structure of mothers and fathers of children in grades 3–6. They found that parental involvement predicted children's level of confidence in their ability to attain their desired outcomes. This supplemented the effects of autonomy support in predicting children's identified and autonomous self-regulation.

**Kushman, J.W. (1992).** The organizational dynamics of teacher workplace commitment: A study of urban elementary and middle schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 28(1), 5–42.

This study examined two types of school commitment: organizational commitment and commitment to student learning. Findings showed that schools high in organizational commitment generally served educationally advantaged students, exhibited orderly school climates conducive to learning, and involved teachers in decisionmaking. Organizational commitment was positively related to student achievement and teacher job satisfaction. Student achievement was found to contribute to increased teacher motivation.

**Osterman, K.F. (2000).** Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323–367.

A review of research about students' sense of acceptance within the school community. The



findings suggest that a student's need for belonging influences multiple dimensions of his behavior, yet schools adopt organizational practices that neglect or undermine students' experience of membership in a supportive community. These findings on students offer interesting parallels to the lives of teachers, as well.

**Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78.**

Researchers examined factors that enhance intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and well-being. They found that when people's psychological need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness was met, their self-motivation and mental health were enhanced.

**Ryan, R.M. (1995). Psychological needs and the facilitation of integrative processes. *Journal of Personality*, 63(3), 397–427.**

In this review of research and theory, the author suggests that an observable lack of integration in human behavior reflects just how dependent human development is on cultural and social conditions nurturing the individual. People function better in social contexts when they feel included.

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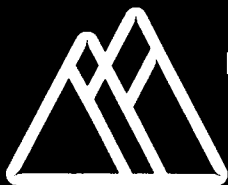
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